



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**

# **Summary of Washington Pacific Halibut Fisheries Management in 2010**

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**WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
SUMMARY OF PACIFIC HALIBUT FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN 2010**

The purpose of this report is to summarize the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (WDFW) management and enforcement activities in the 2010 Pacific halibut fisheries. It includes a synopsis of Washington’s recreational catch and a summary of WDFW’s enforcement efforts relative to patrolling the North Coast (Neah Bay and La Push) recreational halibut fisheries (Appendix A).

**Washington’s Recreational Halibut Fisheries in 2010**

Washington’s halibut fisheries are managed under the Pacific Fishery Management Council’s Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan for Area 2A. The catch sharing plan specifies how the Area 2A total allowable catch (TAC) as defined by IPHC is allocated or “shared” among various state commercial and recreational sectors. For Washington, WDFW manages its recreational fisheries by subarea. These subareas are:

1. Puget Sound (inside waters east of the Sekiu River, including Puget Sound)
  - Eastern Region (inner Sound waters east of Low Point)
  - Western Region (Strait waters west of Low Point)
2. North Coast (waters in the Strait of Juan de Fuca west of the Sekiu River and Pacific Ocean waters south to the Queets River)
3. South Coast (Pacific Ocean waters south of the Queets River to Leadbetter Point)
4. Columbia River (Pacific Ocean waters south of Leadbetter Point to Cape Falcon, Oregon)

A summary of Washington’s recreational halibut seasons for 2010 is described in Table 1.

Table 1.

Subarea	Quota (lbs)	Catch (lbs)	Avg Wt (lbs)	Season Dates
Puget Sound	50,542	71,801	20.2	West: May 28-June 19 East: May 1-May 30
North Coast	101,179	95,014	21.0	May 13, 15, 20, 22 June 3, 5, 19
South Coast	35,887	34,554	15.2	Primary: May 2, 4, 9, 11, 16, 18, 23 Nearshore: May 2- Sept. 30 7-days per week
Columbia River <sup>1/</sup>	13,436	8,242	20.0	Early: May 1-June 25 Thu-Sat; Late: Aug 6- Sept 26 Fri-Sun

<sup>1/</sup> Columbia River harvest is Washington catch only.

Halibut are measured at the dock and the lengths of the samples are then converted to weights. On the coast, lengths are taken throughout the season on a weekly basis and applied to the number of halibut caught to project the total catch in pounds. The catches are then monitored and the fisheries are closed when they are projected to attain their respective subarea quota.

### ***North Coast Subarea***

There were no changes to the season structure for the North Coast subarea for 2010. The general management structure was the same as 2009 and was initially developed to provide better notification of fishery closures and re-openings resulting from in-season quota management. During the past two seasons we have identified two weeks preseason that the halibut fishery would be closed in order to monitor quota attainment and to provide advanced notice as to when potential openings would occur if sufficient quota remained. The fishery continued to operate under a single quota rather than splitting the quota into sub-quotas for May-June and was open two days per week (Thursday and Saturday). Table 2 shows that a reasonable amount of quota continues to be available for fishing opportunity in June even with the elimination of the quota split.

Table 2. North Coast recreational halibut quota divisions and catches in May and June, 2006-10.

	N. Coast Quota	May Quota (72%)	May Catch	May lbs. Remaining	June Quota (28%)	June lbs. Available	Actual June %
2006	119,244	85,856	63,397	22,459	33,388	55,847	47%
2007	116,199	83,663	66,430	17,233	32,536	49,769	43%
2008	109,992	79,194	71,811	7,383	30,798	38,181	35%
2009	108,030	N/A	67,058	N/A	N/A	35,724	33%
2010	101,179	N/A	57,812	N/A	N/A	43,367	43%

### ***South Coast Subarea***

The South Coast subarea was open two days per week (Sunday and Tuesday) in 2010, except for one week when the season was open on Sunday only. This approach provides adequate time to monitor quota attainment and advance notice of a potential closure. It also balances the harvest opportunity between those who prefer to fish on weekends and those who like to fish on weekdays. The nearshore fishery was open seven days per week to improve access to the nearshore set-aside and reduce the amount of incidentally caught halibut that would otherwise be discarded. In addition to season structure changes, the boundary for the nearshore area was revised so that it aligned with the line approximating the 30-fathom bottomfish depth restriction in this area. The change was intended to ease compliance and enforceability in order to maintain an incidental retention opportunity without increasing targetable halibut fishing grounds.

### ***Columbia River Subarea***

There were no changes to the season structure of the Columbia River subarea for the 2010 season. The sub-area quota is divided into an early season starting the first Thursday in May or May 1 if it is a Friday or Saturday and a late season that opens on the first Friday in August. The early season is open Thursday through Saturday and the late season is open Friday through Sunday.

### *Puget Sound Subarea*

In 2010, there were an estimated 3,556 halibut caught in the Puget Sound recreational halibut fishery. The estimated average weight in the fishery —based on 1,432 fish sampled by WDFW—was 20.2 lbs. At this average weight, the total estimated catch amounted to 71,801 lbs, or 21,259 lbs and 42% over the quota for this fishery. The detailed catch information by month and Marine Catch Area is described in Appendix C.

From 2006-2009, WDFW opened the halibut fishery in April because anglers had reported successful catch rates during this period. At the same time, many anglers hold a preference for fishing in May and June. For 2010, the reduced quota and higher catch rates in April meant that there was not sufficient quota to accommodate a season in both April and May. After considering input from a public meeting in early February, WDFW therefore moved the opening date of the eastern region from mid-April to May 1, and reduced the season from five days per week to three days per week (Thursday-Saturday), except for Memorial Day weekend which was open Friday-Sunday, in an effort to stretch the season as long as possible. The eastern season was open through May 30. The western region continued its traditional opening on May 28 with the same days per week with a season through June 19.

In 2009, WDFW undertook a comprehensive review of its Puget Sound recreational fishery catch estimation methodology for all groundfish species, including Pacific halibut, and as a result, decided to revise its catch estimation methodology. After independent review from the Recreational Fishery Information Network (RecFIN) Statistics Subcommittee, the agency employed the new methodology in 2010. The new methodology employs increased standardization and less stratification (i.e., more lumping than splitting of the data) than used in previous years.

WDFW has greater confidence in this new method, although catch estimates are still not as precise as the agency would prefer. WDFW's sampling program involves field interviews that produce a high sampling rate for halibut catches and catch-per-unit-of-effort (CPUE), yet fishing effort is estimated through a telephone survey with a relatively low sample size. This results in confidence intervals in the range of 25% for the estimate of total catch.

The federal Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) also reviewed our Puget Sound sampling and new catch estimation methodology in November and may have additional suggested refinements. Any such recommendations are not expected to affect our Puget Sound halibut catch estimate for 2010 much, if at all. WDFW plans to continue to use the new method into the future, until changed, but will not be revising its catch estimates for years prior to 2010.

Table 3. Puget Sound catch estimates, by region, for 2010.

Area	2010	
	# Halibut	Lbs
Eastern Region	2,335	47,147
Western Region	1,221	24,654
Total	3,556	71,801

## Canadian Halibut Landed Into Neah Bay

As part of WDFW's port sampling efforts for recreational halibut fisheries, we also sample the halibut caught in Canadian waters and landed into Neah Bay from March through October. The number of Canadian halibut landed into Neah Bay totaled 1,245 for 2010; this is approximately 25 percent less than in 2009 and nearly a quarter of the amount landed in 2008. The amount of Canadian halibut landed into Neah Bay has decreased significantly since 2007 likely due to increasing restrictions implemented by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada on recreational halibut regulations and licensing requirements for the waters adjacent to Neah Bay.

Table 4 summarizes the Canadian halibut catch landed into Neah Bay for 2006-2010. A weekly catch summary of Canadian halibut brought into Neah Bay by charter and private vessels (in numbers of fish) is described in Appendix B.

Table 4. Canadian halibut landings into Neah Bay, Washington, in 2006-2010.

Year	# Boats	# Anglers	# Halibut
2006	1,863	8,223	13,045
2007	1,579	6,820	9,977
2008	834	3,412	4,778
2009	624	1,956	1,609
2010	539	1,629	1,245

### Summary

WDFW plans to continue to monitor and sample our recreational and commercial fisheries, including the amount of halibut caught in Canadian waters and landed into Neah Bay; continue to take a precautionary approach when setting our Puget Sound season; maintain our enforcement efforts during the halibut recreational fisheries; and monitor the efforts to document halibut bycatch in the West Coast trawl fisheries and recommend appropriate action through the Pacific Fishery Management Council.

**WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM**

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Statewide Marine Division has conducted concentrated enforcement activities around the recreational halibut season along the north coast for the past several years. The 2010 season was no exception. Enforcement patrols were designed to address Washington’s halibut rules and offer a level of protection for other species that can be encountered while pursuing halibut, particularly yelloweye and canary rockfish that are designated as overfished. Additionally, cross-border activities associated with Washington residents fishing in Canada were monitored.

Concurrent enforcement activities that occurred during the 2010 halibut patrols included, but were not limited to: (1) ensuring compliance with the recreational and commercial Rockfish Conservation Area closures; (2) enforcing canary and yelloweye rockfish no-retention rules in the recreational fishery; (3) monitoring and maintaining compliance with Canadian-caught halibut landings; (4) enforcing rules of the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary; (5) monitoring vessel safety compliance; and (6) ensuring compliance with general groundfish regulations.

The following is a summary of patrol activities directed at Washington’s 2010 north coast recreational halibut fishery.

**May 13 & 15, 2010 Opener:**

This year’s recreational halibut emphasis patrol was coined “Operation Yellow Eye - 2010.” As in past years, this effort was organized to address issues surrounding the opening of the recreational halibut season. Due to halibut grounds being closely associated with locations where yelloweye rockfish can be found, enforcement of areas closed to protect this species was a priority during the halibut opener.

The operation has been scaled back over the past few years in response to a high compliance rate, a split season opener, and concerns from the public about being boarded too many times. Enforcement coverage included dock patrols at Neah Bay and Snow Creek, one WDFW patrol vessel out of La Push, two WDFW vessels, one Clallam County patrol vessel out of Neah Bay, and one USCG helicopter flight out of Port Angeles.

The first two-day opener resulted in a slight decrease in the mean number of angler contacts, with 763 contacts, and 136 violations.

**2010 Activity Summary:**

	<b># OF ANGLERS CONTACTED</b>	<b># OF VIOLATIONS</b>	<b>CITATIONS</b>	<b>WARNINGS</b>
<b>MAY 13 &amp; 15</b>	763	136	41	95

**Opening Weekend Comparisons:**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b># OF ANGLERS CONTACTED</b>	<b># OF VIOLATIONS</b>	<b>MEAN COMPLIANCE %</b>
2007	1,057	110	89.6%
2008	424	38	91.0%
2009	1,309	265	79.8%
2010	763	136	82.2%
Average	888	137.3	85.2%

**May 27 & 29, 2010:**

Closed.

**June 3 & 5, 2010:**

Enforcement patrols occurred for halibut and other groundfish in the Neah Bay and western Strait of Juan de Fuca area. The purpose of the patrols was to work the open halibut fisheries, the new groundfish regulations and rockfish limits. Both compliance and catch rates were good, however a number of violations were addressed. The most common violations included barbed hooks, failure to record catch, fishing in areas with unlawful catch aboard the vessel and closed season rockfish.

An additional patrol occurred in LaPush on a closed halibut day. Only a few people were out to catch rockfish. No violations were observed.

**June 12, 19 & 20, 2010**

Officers patrolled the La Push and Neah Bay areas to enforce closed season halibut, and the Rockfish Conservation Area. Violations encountered include fishing halibut closed waters, fishing rockfish closed waters, possession of canary and quillback rockfish closed season, fishing with barbed hooks, fail to record halibut, and boater safety violations.

**Efforts in addition to directed patrols:**

Throughout the summer of 2010, Detachment Eight officers dedicated a significant amount of time patrolling the north coast of Washington state and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, including a U.S./Canada border patrol in late July. All aspects of fisheries enforcement, including recreational fishing restrictions to protect overfished rockfish, Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary enforcement, vessel safety, and all other laws of the state were addressed.

**Appendix B.**

Table 1. Canadian halibut landed into Neah Bay in 2010, by week and fishing mode.

Stat Week	(dates)	Charter			Private			Total		
		Boats	Anglers	Halibut	Boats	Anglers	Halibut	Boats	Anglers	Halibut
19	5/3-5/9	0	0	0	5	13	10	5	13	10
20	5/10-5/16	1	5	0	23	51	47	26	66	47
21	5/17-5/23	0	0	0	4	13	11	4	13	11
22	5/24-5/30	1	4	2	3	8	6	4	12	8
23	5/30-6/6	1	8	8	5	9	11	6	17	19
24	6/7-6/13	4	32	28	8	19	17	12	51	45
25	6/14-6/20	1	11	11	6	18	12	8	29	22
26	6/21-6/27	2	16	16	7	21	10	9	37	26
27	6/28-7/4	3	19	13	65	181	141	68	200	154
28	7/5-7/11	8	50	31	30	91	77	38	141	108
29	7/12-7/18	1	7	7	23	70	63	24	77	70
30	7/19-7/25	1	11	11	12	27	19	14	38	29
31	7/26-8/1	2	10	2	50	137	108	52	147	110
32	8/2-8/8	0	0	0	97	290	241	97	290	241
33	8/9-8/15	6	14	14	64	221	165	70	235	179
34	8/16-8/22	0	0	0	94	229	142	94	229	142
35	8/23-8/29	1	8	8	6	18	8	7	26	16
36	8/30-9/5	1	8	8	0	0	0	1	8	8
Total		33	203	159	502	1416	1088	539	1629	1245

Note: Although Canadian halibut landings into Neah Bay are sampled from March through October the table includes only weeks with Canadian halibut landings.

## 2010 Puget Sound Halibut Estimates by Month and Area

**Table 1. Number of Halibut by Month and Area**

Month	Catch Area				Grand Total
	5	6	7	9	
May	757	2118	122	95	3092
June	464				464
<b>Grand Total</b>	1221	2118	122	95	3556

**Table 2. Pounds of Halibut by Month and Area**

Month	Catch Area				Grand Total
	5	6	7	9	
May	15,285	42,765	2,463	1,918	62,432
June	9,369	0	0	0	9,369
<b>Grand Total</b>	24,654	42,765	2,463	1,918	71,801

Avg. wt. 20.2 lbs.